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TAGS: [OVIP](#) [MARR](#) [PREL](#) [NATO](#) [SR](#)

SUBJECT: Engaging With Serbia's Leadership After Riga

Classified by Ambassador Michael C. Polt, reasons 1.4 (b,d)

¶1. (c) NATO's offer of PfP membership to Serbia creates an opportunity to move the ball forward on greater bilateral and multilateral defense cooperation. To fill this partnership with substance, we are already seeking a public and clear commitment to Euroatlantic integration from those democratic parties that PfP engagement is designed to help. At a minimum this includes: unambiguous public statements by Kostunica and other GoS leaders that they accept the offer and will move immediately to complete the PfP membership process; appointment of the Chief of the General Staff by President Tadic; and exercise of the GLOC agreement with NATO.

¶2. (c) Given the Radical's campaign strategy to run on a anti-Hague and anti-U.S. platform, the PfP news can be very helpful in reinforcing the democrats' strategy to draw a clear line between their vision of the future and the backward looking message of nationalist extremists. We will push back on any indication from Kostunica or Tadic that they have to wait until the Parliament is back in session in order to proceed further on defense reform and PfP engagement.

¶3. (c) Since the invitation, the Ambassador has already been in touch with Tadic, Kostunica, FONMIN Draskovic and DEFMIN Stankovic working the points below. We recommend calls from the Secretary or another appropriate high-level State Department official to President Tadic, Prime Minister Kostunica, and Foreign Minister Draskovic that would highlight these themes:

-- Congratulate the leaders on the Riga outcome.

-- Emphasize this is a vote of confidence in their commitment to further defense reform and to full Hague cooperation.

-- Reiterate that we still expect they will arrest and transfer Ratko Mladic and other fugitive PIFWCs to The Hague.

-- Express our readiness to engage quickly and expansively on defense cooperation. This includes our expectation that Serbia will quickly accept the membership offer (e.g., by quickly signing its framework document) before the end of the year. It also includes our expectation that Serbia will quickly implement the Ground Lines of Communication agreement signed with NATO SECGEN de Hoop Scheffer in 2005.

¶3. (c) Additional points for President Tadic:

-- This is an important opportunity to show your public commitment to engagement with NATO.

-- We trust you will now quickly confirm General Zdravko Ponos as your Chief of the General Staff in accordance with your authorities as president.

-- We hope Serbia will carry through on its intention to attach Serbian medical personnel to an existing ISAF deployment.

-- We suggest you publicly promote unit exchanges and other military-to-military engagement programs through SPP and PfP in the coming weeks.

14. (c) Additional Points for Prime Minister Kostunica:

-- This decision is an acknowledgement of Serbia's progress on defense reform.

-- An immediate and positive response to NATO's invitation will help build Serbia's standing and exploit a invaluable opportunity.

-- Mladic conditionality still exists for further integration into NATO.

-- We still expect the current and future Serbian governments to implement the recommendations for concrete action we delivered to you in July.

-- Serbia's membership in PfP will provide a valuable way of pushing forward on your stated commitment to move Serbia closer to the rest of Europe. Your support of President Tadic on national defense matters, like the appointment of the Chief of the General Staff, participation in ISAF and

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other peacekeeping as well as training exercises will be critical.

15. (c) Additional Points for Foreign Minister Draskovic:

-- We know this has long been a dream of yours.

-- Thank you for your continued positive engagement. We will be looking for an appropriate way to recognize your special role in moving the PfP debate forward.

-- We will look to you to ensure, both in private and in public, that PfP membership has the effect you have long predicted - that engagement and further military reform will make it easier to capture Ratko Mladic.

MOORE